

Guidance for Starting a Search and Rescue Team

If you desire to start your own team, the following is a list of suggestions:

1. Hold a meeting to discuss the type of service your team will render, i.e., search management, hasty search, grid search, search dogs, water rescue, cave rescue, etc.
This decision should be based upon the skills and preference of the volunteers and the needs of the area. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or Pennsylvania SAR Council can offer advice in making this decision.
2. Select a name for your team. Most teams choose a geographical name.
3. Select temporary officers: a president, a secretary, and a training officer.
4. Temporary officers should visit with the local authorities, County Emergency Management, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and discuss operating procedures; establish and maintain a good working relationship with these authorities.
5. Draft a temporary set of objectives. These should define the scope of service the unit will provide.
6. Set a meeting date and start holding meetings.
7. Draft some membership requirements. Do not make them too difficult.
8. Training officers should make out a training program based upon the services the unit has elected to provide. Training standards are available. Check with Pennsylvania SAR Council or Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. SAR courses available through Pennsylvania Fire Academy.
9. The secretary should make a call list. This list is a roster of members' names, telephone numbers, home and business, and addresses.
10. Give a copy of your call list to the local authorities that will call you for your services.
11. Make a list of needed equipment and make plans for acquiring it.
12. After your team has been in existence awhile, it will want to approve a constitution and by-laws. Formal elections should be held following the procedures in the new by-laws.
13. Other decisions to make as your team grows, whether to: incorporate, apply for income tax exemption, obtain liability and workmen's compensation insurance, design a unit emblem.

